

WILD PARAGUAY.¹

EL GRAN CHACO is the name of that great, low-lying alluvial plain, which is situated where the Republics of Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia meet. Extending over 200,000 square miles, it is populated, but for a mere fringe of white settlements, entirely by Indians, the total population of whom is estimated at not more than 135,000. Many futile attempts have been made by the Spaniards to explore this vast district, or to "reduce" the fierce native

was not until the year 1889 that the same society succeeded in establishing a mission among the Chaco Indians.

W. Barbrooke Grubb, then quite a young man, was sent out and entrusted with the seemingly hopeless task. For twenty years this pioneer and marvel of devotion has lived amongst the savages, at first quite alone, later on joined by helpmates. The present book deals mainly with the events and experiences of the early five lonely years amongst the Lengua tribe, a little to the west of the Paraguayan town of Concepcion. Now there is a flourishing mission, called Waik-thlatingmangyalwa, the place where Prof. J. G. Kerr and the late J. Budgett got their material for the mudfish *Lepidosiren*. It is safe for the white man to traverse some 200 miles west of the river Paraguay, over roads cut by the missionaries; thousands of cattle are now tended by Indians, where but a few years ago men, who had acquired lands, scarcely dared to inspect them for fear of these same Indians. In these parts Grubb's is a name to conjure with, and the Paraguayan Government fully acknowledge what they owe to this man by having made him Commissary-General of the Chaco, with the additional title of "Pacificador de los Indios."

How has he achieved it? By living alone with these savages and almost like one of them, learning their language and customs, without worrying them, but all the time trying to understand what is really at the back of the Indian's mind. Gradually they in turn came to look upon him not as a harmless lunatic, but to respect him. It was uphill work, and not without danger; as for that matter, one of his trusted and most intelligent friends shot an arrow into him, and left him for dead, several days' journey from the nearest native village. This foul deed enraged the native community so much that they ultimately caught the would-be murderer, killed him, and burnt his body to ashes. There is no other record of a Chaco-Indian being slain by his own tribesmen for the murder of a white man.

The greatest difficulty in gaining the confidence of the natives was the opposition of the medicine-men, or witch-doctors, utterly ignorant but shrewd humbugs, who, of course, saw at once that their power

would wane as much as the white man's reasoning influence ascended.

The many long years spent with these hitherto almost unknown people have enabled the author to give us a narrative from the point of view of seasoned experience, instead of first impressions, and thus it has come to pass that chapter after chapter, as they deal with the mode of life, rites, and beliefs, are so many essays of ripened authority. It may, however, be regretted that many of the revolting features, and most of their rites are inclined that way, are scarcely hinted at, and that the question of sex is but lightly

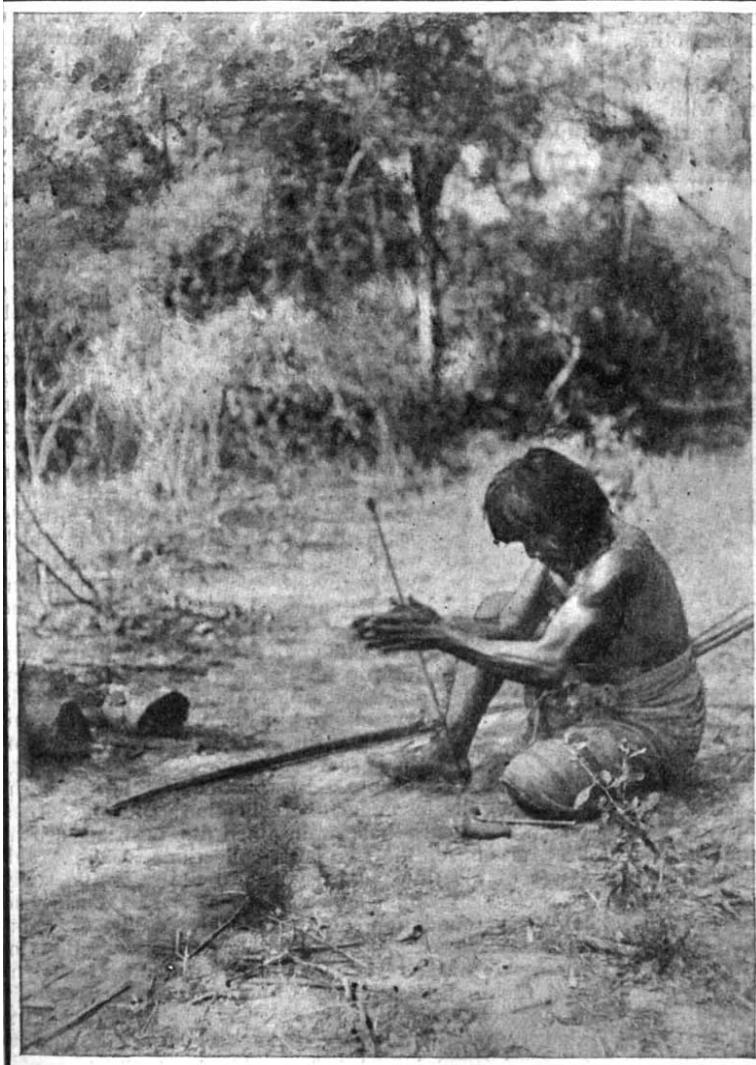


FIG. 1.—Procuring Fire by Friction. From "An Unknown People in an Unknown Land."

tribes to the white man's ways; they ended mostly in massacres of the exploring parties, and the Chaco was therefore left severely alone until within quite recent times. Even the Jesuit missions in the middle of the eighteenth century had fared badly; futile also was the attempt made by Captain Allen Gardiner, founder of the South American Missionary Society, to settle among the Tobas in the year 1870, and it

¹ "An Unknown People in an Unknown Land": an Account of the Life and Customs of the Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco, with Adventures and Experiences met with during Twenty Years' Pioneering and Exploration amongst them. By W. Barbrooke Grubb. Edited by H. T. Morrey Jones. Pp. 330. (London: Seeley and Co., Ltd., 1911.) Price 16s. net.

touched. The Lenguas, being strong believers in reincarnation, are convinced that the soul of a deceased person hovers about his old haunts, watching for the opportunity of slipping into some living person. Such a chance is provided when a man dreams, because then his soul is wandering, and these people suffer terribly from dreams, so much, indeed, that it may be questioned whether a more rational diet, or medical relief from indigestion, would not have at least accelerated the painfully slow process of religious conversion. This reincarnation doctrine leads to such ludicrous mental conditions that a man in full vigour may be in doubt whether he is himself or not, asserting gravely that his own real soul is at a distance, being kept away by devils, and that some other, departed, soul has crept into him!

Owing to the custom of infanticide, especially of girls, the men are in the great majority, with the result that every girl has a wide selection of partners.



FIG. 2.—Blanket Weaving. From "An Unknown People in an Unknown Land."

Further, native law requires that the man must leave his own people and join those of his wife. Her main object in life being to feed well and to have as little drudgery as possible, she seeks a mate of a mild disposition, who will be subservient to her rule, besides being a good hunter and gardener. There is a delightful chapter on the baneful result of communalism, socialist principles being carried to such perfection that the lazy bodies will neither hunt nor fish as long as there is something to eat elsewhere, because it is a strict law that all shall share in everybody else's spoil.

The author's profits of this remarkable and well-illustrated book will be devoted to the support of the Church of England South American Missionary Society.

PROF. M. H. N. STORY MASKELYNE, F.R.S.

PROF. MERVYN HERBERT NEVIL STORY MASKELYNE, whose death on May 20 was announced in last week's NATURE, was born on September 3, 1823, and was the son of Anthony Mervyn Story, F.R.S., who married the only daughter of Nevil Maskelyne, the famous Astronomer Royal. The family is thus one of scientific distinction through three generations, and it is not surprising that Maskelyne was early in life attracted to the study of science.

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He went to Wadham College, Oxford, where he took his degree in 1845, and even in those early days all his spare time, energy, and resources were devoted to the pursuit of chemistry, at a time when there were very limited facilities for the study of science at the university.

In 1856 Maskelyne succeeded Buckland, and became professor of mineralogy, and held that office until the year 1895. He had a laboratory and residence under the Old Ashmolean Buildings, and was one of the chief workers in experimental chemistry in Oxford. He was indeed urged by many persons to be a candidate for the chair of chemistry, which became vacant in 1855, but was not willing to stand in opposition to his friend, Benjamin Brodie. He played a prominent part in the establishment of science teaching in Oxford, and was secretary of the first committee formed to promote the scheme for building a university museum. Some of his reminiscences of that period are related in Dr. Vernon's "History of the Oxford Museum," where it is stated that his classes in analytical chemistry were attended, amongst others, by Thomson, afterwards Archbishop of York, and Henry Smith.

In 1857 he became keeper of the department of minerals in the British Museum, and for twenty-three years combined this office with his Oxford professorship. The keepership of the mineral department he resigned in 1880, when he became Liberal member of Parliament for Cricklade, and afterwards for North Wilts, until the year 1892, when he retired from active political life. Referring to his father's death, he wrote, "it was like a whirlwind that bore me from the museum, where my life would have been impossible, to this country life and into the House of Commons."

Maskelyne's scientific activity was for the greater part of his life in the field of mineralogy, and especially crystallography, and his interests were largely centred in the development of

the great collection of minerals at the British Museum. In particular, he brought together the wonderful collection of meteorites which for years has maintained its position as the best, or one of the two best, collections in the world. Much of his time was devoted to the scientific study of these remarkable objects. In 1850 Mr. Sorby had laid the foundation of the modern study of rocks by showing that it was possible to grind sections of them so thin as to be transparent, and Maskelyne was the first to apply the new method to the study of meteorites, and was able by the microscope to identify in them many terrestrial minerals and to discover some which are unknown on earth.

Although in the study of higher physics and mathematics he must have been mainly self-taught, it was towards the physical and crystallographical sides of mineralogy that he was particularly attracted. Mineralogy had become an exact science in the hands of Haüy at the close of the eighteenth century, and Whewell and his eminent successor Miller kept alive in Cambridge the mathematical treatment of crystallography.

It was Maskelyne's work to develop in particular the subject of the symmetry of crystals, upon which he gave a course of lectures before the Chemical Society in the year 1875. Victor von Lang, who subsequently became professor of physics at Vienna, had